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The Aborigines of Western Australia

Albert F. Calvert

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THE ABORIGINES

OF

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

BY

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PREFACE.

ANY attempt to fathom the depth of mystery which surrounds the history of the Australian Aboriginal must necessarily be—in the main—a failure. The subject is surrounded with difficulty. Captain Dampier was the first Englishman known to have made the acquaintance of the Australian natives, whom he calls "the poor winking people of New Holland, the miserablest people on earth," and so forth. During the intervening two centuries we have not added much to our knowledge regarding them. They have no written language, and are forbidden to speak of the dead: two serious obstacles to research.

I am well aware that the subject is rather out of my line, and for this reason alone I can scarcely expect to do justice to the theme. Nevertheless, during my wanderings through Western Australia, in the capacity of a mining engineer, I came across a good many of the natives; and taking a profound interest in everything connected with the colony I resolved to set down in brief and simple form such facts as I could glean regarding this most curious specimen of the human race. I lay no more claim to originality than is due to one who has arranged his matter in his own way, and added a few thoughts suggested and accruing.

ALBERT F. CALVERT.

Piccadilly Club, W.

THE ABORIGINES
OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

REGARDING the aborigines of Western Australia the materials at our disposal are somewhat scanty.

There exists a theory that all savages are the degraded descendants of civilized ancestors. If this be true it seems to me that the Australian Blackboys' period of enlightenment must have existed very far back in the dim twilight of ancient history.

Theories are, as is well known, apt to outrun facts, so I will not try my reader's patience by venturing to discuss the question of "rise or fall," but content myself with the observation that through unnumbered ages there have been wanderers in the desert, side by side with dwellers in cities; and our black Australian brother seems to have descended from the former class. I am likewise led to remark in passing, that our first parents before the fall did not live in a state of civilization, but of ignorance—an ignorance which was undoubtedly bliss,—for ever to be dispelled by the knowledge of good and evil. It was after the fall when they had to work, and became ashamed of their nude condition, that they

bethought them of the most primitive modes of dress. Thus did civilization and sin enter the world hand in hand, soon after the creation; and the fig leaf was ancestor to the petticoat.

Among the rudest tribes of men, inhabitants of the wild forests and deserts, dependent for their food and clothing on the accidental produce of the earth or spoils of the chase, a form of skull is prevalent, which is termed prognathous, indicating an extension forward of the jaws. The facial angle peculiar to this formation is low, and is strongly developed among the Alfurian or Australian races. They probably spring from a common source; and the Rev. William Ridley draws attention to the interesting fact that the blacks themselves always have an idea that their ancestors came from the north. Then the current of migration has been ever towards the south and west, and the natives of the north-eastern corner call it "Kai Dowdai" or Little Country. This seems strange when New Guinea is known to them as "Muggi Dowdai" or Great Country. The anomaly is accounted for by their ignorance of the extent of country they inhabit. To those living near Cape York, and passing to and fro across the strait dividing New Holland from New Guinea, the low narrow promontory would seem insignificant compared with the great mountain ranges of the latter. Then again there is a tradition among some tribes that their first parents landed on the North West Corner from Java. All this, however, is at the best but wild conjecture. The real source from which the Aborigines of Australia

originally came is one of those mysteries buried in the impenetrable depths of an unwritten past.

Although marked differences exist between the various Australian languages, and also considerable differences in frame and physiognomy between the various tribes; still the fundamental unity of the population from Swan River to Botany Bay, and from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Bass's Straits is generally admitted.

The natives have no written language and our alphabet is totally inadequate to give expression to some of the sounds which are so volubly emitted. Then of course there are very many different dialects of which the following may be said to be the most important:—

Kamilaroi.—This is spoken from the Castlereagh to the Darling and also on the Namai.

Kailwun.—Spoken on the Barwan, below the junction with the Namai.

Kogai.—This is the dialect in use by all the nations roaming to the Westward of the Baloune all along the Maronoa and the Congoon.

Rukumbul.—Around Calandoon in Queensland; also on the Weir and Macintyre.

Dippil.—About Durundrum on the north side of Moreton Bay and thence towards Wide Bay and the Burnett district in Queensland.

Turrabul.—On the Brisbane River.

Turruwal.—Once spoken by the tribe of Port Jackson, now extinct.

Wodi-Wodi.—In Illawarra, from Wollongong to the Shoalhaven.

Waradgeri.—On the Murrumbidgee and Lauchlan.

Within the boundaries of Western Australia itself there are numerous dialects spoken. I will only trouble my readers with one illustration. From King George's Sound to Champion Bay a baby is known as "Good-ja" or "Nuba"; in the New Norcian District about 80 miles north from Perth, the word is "Chiengallon"; in the Eastern District it would be called "Coo-long", and in the neighbourhood of Albany, "Culong". Again at Banbury, Busselton, and along the coast, the infant becomes "Duaing"; at Blackwood, "Noba"; at Champion Bay, Victoria District, "Nurellee"; while at Nickol Bay and in the Roeburn District it rejoices in the cheerful name of "Yandeeyarrah."

Of the three principal languages used near the settled districts, it may be said, in common, that they are rendered extremely difficult to Europeans, by the —to our way of thinking—utter want of method in arrangement of words in sentences.

An illustration of my meaning may, perhaps, best be given, by submitting the following exercise, written by the late J. F. Armstrong, Government Interpreter to the Western Australian tribes.

In English the exercise runs thus :—

"When we first landed here we wanted to be friendly with you natives. Why were you so angry, why did you spear the white people? We did not want to kill you or hurt you in any way. Why would you

not be friends and let us learn your language? We could shew you how to use a gun, make nets, boats, and many other things; but you set yourselves against us for years, until you found that we were the strongest, otherwise you would have killed us all, as you killed the other white people."

To put that speech into a possible form, for comprehension for the blacks, the words would have to be re-arranged and altered thus:—

"We at first here came reside we angry not, and so on; heart good you to; you why us hate? Why you us with no cause speared? We you in anger thought not beat, and so on. You why heart bad? We then your language soon understand correctly. We then you gun good use shew or tell; net and such like shew tell; boat and such like and numerous nameless things good and common. But you us angry strong, winter summer many. Then we really fought. You then said 'Ah! the whites strong.' If we weak you long ago us kill all others like."

To give the reader an idea of how the words of a native language look when printed the above may be literally translated thus:—

"Nganneel ingar-ungar nhalla bart nginnaga, nganneel gurrangbroo na-broo; goordoo gwabba nurang-uk; nurang nyte-juk gnalleckuk dellut-a bart! Nyte-juk nurang nganneel in yaga yaga daanugga? Nganneel nureel en gurrang Katteege-broo booma-broo na-broo. Nurang nyte-juk Goordoo wendang? Nganneel garoo nureeluk mya gete kateega met in Nganneel garoo

nureel in gun gwabbyne wurrung-un net, na may wurrungun boat ware na ware nyteby nyteby na gwabbyne ware warra. Garoo nureel nganneeluk gurrang moordooit. Muggore, Beroke, boola, garoo ngallutta boondojil, bukadge; mureel garoo wangga-Nah! Djanga moordoit jil. Minning ngullara babba, nurang goord nganneel in booma, moondang-um-um waame-ma mogin."

The natives of Western Australia did not impress their first visitors from England very favourably. In Captain William Dampier's book, published in St. Paul's Churchyard, London in 1697, he describes his visit to the North Western coasts and quaintly calls the aborigines "The poor winking people of New Holland." In another part of his work they are declared to be "the miserablest people in the world." To shew his very poor opinion of them, the plain spoken Buccaneer assures his readers that the Hottentots ("Hodmadods" he calls them), whom he allows to be rather a nasty lot, were perfect gentlemen in comparison with the objectionable folk he was describing. The "Hodmadods," it appeared were possessed of houses, skin garments, sheep, poultry, and fruits of the earth, whereas the unfortunate people who so excited his disgust differed "but little from ye brutes." The worthy captain admits that they were tall and straight bodied but the extreme thinness of their legs was painful to behold. Also their "great heads, round foreheads and big brows" did not altogether please him.

It seems to have been, however, the ocular eccentricities of the poor creatures which most excited the

circumnavigator's contemptuous pity. "Their eyelids," he informs us, were "always half closed to keep the flies out of their eyes, they being so troublesome, that no fanning would keep them from coming to one's face, and without the assistance of both hands to keep them off." He continues "they will creep into one's nostrils and mouth too, if the lips are not shut very close." So that "the poor natives from their infancy being thus annoyed with these insects they do never open their eyes as other people; and therefore they cannot see far, unless they hold up their heads as if they were looking at somewhat over them."

The "great bottle noses" of the poor Australians also much disgusted the gallant voyager. And their "full lips and wide mouths," the two front teeth wanting in all of them, men and women. I fancy Mr Dampier was mistaken regarding the women—old and young, likewise irritated him. Whether they drew them out he unfortunately "knew not." "Neither," he goes on to remark, in his unflattering description, "have they any beards. They are long visaged, and of a very unpleasing aspect, having no one graceful feature in their faces. Their hair is short, black, and curls like that of the negroes, and not long and lank like the common Indians. The colour of their skins is coal black, like that of the negroes of Guinea."

The poor creatures appear in every way to have disappointed Dampier, inasmuch they had no houses, "the earth being their bed and the Heaven their canopy, and no food except a small sort of fish which they got

by making wares of stone across little coves or branches of the sea." These they eked out with cockles, mussels, and periwinkles. Then strange to say they broiled these on the coals, the only respectable sort of thing he noticed about them; though as to how they got their fires, he confesses his ignorance. Anything in the shape of work they declined to perform, and when the crafty mariner gave to one an old pair of breeches, to another a ragged shirt, and to a third a jacket "that was scarce worth owning," expecting the savages in return to "work heartily" at filling the ship's water barrels, he was chagrined at their behaviour. As a matter of fact they stood "grinning at him and at one another like so many monkeys!" In this it may be remarked they were not quite such fools as they looked. Such an account as the famous voyager gave, in England, of his visit to Western Australia, in January, 1688, was not calculated to encourage emigration; nor, indeed, was the record of his later experiences on the same coast eleven years later.

Dampier was regarded as one of the most intelligent and trustworthy of the navigators of his time, and, because his descriptions are quaint and forcible, I have quoted him rather fully. When, however, he states solemnly that "the earth affords the natives no food at all," and that "there is neither herb root pulse, nor any sort of grain, nor any sort of bird or beast that they can catch or kill, having no instruments wherewithal to do so"; it only proves how erroneous are apt to be superficial or cursory observations. Dampier's indict-

ment was, however, chiefly directed against the country itself, the natives being treated with a sort of amused commiseration.

Throughout Australia as in America, and elsewhere, the gradual extinction of the natives seems to be one of the inevitable results of civilization. Even where the most humane measures have been adopted, it seems the fiat of some inscrutable power that the savage race must cease to exist. The surrounding conditions of life, mental and physical being entirely changed, those who collect around townships and stations slowly but surely follow the fate of their fellows who have previously been killed in conflict with the first settlers. Upon the white man, alas! the responsibility chiefly rests. His vicious habits are too faithfully copied by the sons and daughters of the desert; drunkenness and the diseases which follow in its train being a potent factor in thinning the aboriginal ranks. It is their misfortune to have stood in the way of colonization, and it is scarcely to be wondered at if they have endeavoured to avenge occupation, invasion, and robbery of their hunting grounds by deeds of bloody atrocity. It must not be forgotten, however, that the colonists were the aggressors, and that they were oftentimes guilty of crimes against the natives of even more ferocious cruelty than those of the savages themselves. It is, indeed, a humiliating reflection, that British colonization has done much to destroy, and British Christianity but little to save, the aborigines of Australia. Their degrading customs and brutal crimes

have been put forward as a justification for their speedy extinction; while their nobler qualities, as true friends and faithful servants, have been forgotten. If degradation alone be held to justify extinction, how many subjects of Her Majesty might well be wiped off the face of the earth, within a four-mile radius of the British Museum! Civilized human nature is a strange and fantastic compound, whether it owes allegiance to the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, the Tricolor, or any flag that flies. Is it then to be marvelled at, that we find among these untaught savages a wild conglomeration of wisdom and folly, nobility and depravity, honour and treachery?

Many of our habits, doubtless, they refuse to imitate. They will cook their food on the embers, but object to boiling or stewing; most kinds of work they rather object to, but smoking and drinking are of course readily acquired. Praiseworthy efforts have been made by both Protestant and Catholic Missionaries among the natives of Western Australia; the most successful of the missions being that started by Bishop Salvado. This Monastic Institution at New Norcia — conducted by Spanish monks—was that spoken of by Sir F. Napier Broome, G.C.M.G., in a paper read by him to the members of the Royal Colonial Institute some years ago.

He says "Australian natives not only sing in church or study in school, but are engaged side by side with the Monks in agriculture and various other industries, also, besides playing the violin and other instruments in the Mission Band, playing cricket in the Mission eleven

which visits Perth for an occasional match, and is generally victorious.

The New Norcia Mission merits much more notice than time allows me to give to it. Its philanthropic and practical work among the aborigines of the Colony has now been carried on for more than a generation year by year. With infinite pains, labours, and expense it turns a number of the natives into Christian and civilized beings. *The first principle of the work at New Norcia is that it shall go beyond schooling and religious teaching.* I have known a full-blooded low type savage go forth from this Mission into civilized life, *not only a good Christian, but an expert telegraphist.*"

Lady Barker also writes of this noble monastery of Spanish Benedictines. She says:—

"Just below us lay a wide fertile valley, with a large and prosperous village, or indeed town, mapped out by excellent roads and streets, with neat little houses on each side. In the centre stands a good-sized chapel, with good schools near it; and the large monastery on the opposite side of the road seemed to have a splendid garden at the back, stretching down to the river-side." Then she goes on to describe:—"A regular string band, some eighteen or twenty strong, of native boys; one playing a big double bass, others violins, a 'cello, and so forth. Such nice little fellows, black as jet, but intelligent, well-looking, and well-mannered." And she adds: "It is impossible to imagine anything more devoted and beautiful than the life these good fathers lead; and more

encouraging than the results of their missions work of about thirty-five years.

The success of these practical, earnest and well-directed efforts proves that the Western Australian native is not the intractable human brute which Captain Dampier supposed.

Passing over a period of a century and a half, during which time many other navigators were more or less disappointed, if not disgusted, by "the poor winking people of New Holland," I notice, that when in June, 1829, a party of officers and men, under Lieutenant Preston, R.N., landed from H.M.S. Challenger at Browne Mount, Cockburn Sound, for the purpose of exploring the Canning River and intervening country, they were surprised at the absence of natives on this occasion. "But," says the writer of the account of the exploration, "there can be little doubt we passed close to some of them, as we saw many of their wigwams and many traces of themselves. It is more than probable they did not like our appearance and avoided us; and from the nature of the country and their superior power of vision they have easy means of concealment." It will be remembered that Dampier described them as being almost blind, and as having no sort of hut as shelter.

Then in September of the same year Lieutenant Preston describes his meeting with the natives, having landed for exploring purposes from H.M.S. Sulphur. He found them most friendly and intelligent, gave them a swan, some rings, knives, beads, etc., and

received in exchange some spears and a stone hatchet. The shooting of a kangaroo rat astonished them mightily, and they scattered in all directions at the report of the gun. "In November," the Lieutenant says, "accompanied by Mr. Collie, we examined Geography Bay, and came across thirty-five natives near Port Vasse. They were most amiable; but shewed considerable shrewdness in bartering, parting with knives, hatchets, and spears, only after considerable arguments."

Ensign Dale, in August, 1831, directed an expedition to the eastward of the Darling Mountains. He leaves Perth, we read, on the last day of July, and proceeds to Thompson and Trimmer's on the Swan River; then he picks up Mr. Brockman—his party consisting of a soldier, a store-keeper, and the last-named gentleman. On the 7th of August they discover Mount Mackie, which they named in compliment to the then chairman of the court of quarter sessions. On the 10th, they arrived at the Dyott Range, called after General Dyott, commanding the 63rd Regiment; the same day finding a litter of native dogs, the mother having left at their approach, and succeeded in bringing two of them alive to Perth. This would have made an interesting little item of news for the "Perth Enquirer." But the printing press had not yet arrived from England. Near their bivouac they discover a cavern, the interior being arched and resembling an ancient ruin. On one side was rudely carved what was evidently intended to represent an image of the sun, it being a circular figure about eighteen inches in diameter, emitting rays from its left side, and having

without the circle lines meeting each other nearly at right angles. Close to this representation of the sun, were the impressions of an arm and several hands. This spot they consider to have been a native place of worship.

Again in the same year, we have the record of an excursion in a whale-boat from Raine, Point to Point d'Estrecasteaux. This explorer, whose name is not mentioned, formed very favourable impressions of the natives, who were highly delighted at the catching of snappers with fish hooks. The narrator goes on to say "Mitchell saw a man on the beach about half a mile distant, and with a glass made him out to be a native. I took my gun and walked towards him. After I had gone about half way, and he saw no other person following me, he advanced and seemed highly delighted when I made him understand I wished him to go to the boat with me; and he very readily gave me his three spears and throwing stick, (which were certainly better made than any I had seen before), and carried my gun to the boat. He appeared astonished when we made him understand that we came from the sea through the breakers. After dressing him, giving him a stocking full of sugar, a little bread and as much cloth as he chose to carry away, and making him understand that he was to go and bring the whole tribe, he departed, but we did not see him again, nor did he bring his friends."

Mr. J. Bussell appears about this time to have made a journey from the Blackwood to the Vasse, and about

this period traversed a tract of country which seems to have enraptured the explorer, for he b[illegible] into poetry :

" With daisies pied, and vio[illegible]
And ladies smocks all sil[illegible]

he exclaims speaking of the herbag[illegible] over. But immediately after, moderating his [illegible]rts he explains that "The flowers were not perh[illegible] precisely the same that characterized an English meadow; they were not the less beautiful in appearance. As usual, "nought but man was vile," or at all events of rather an unlovely appearance for amidst flowers varied in form, as brilliant in colour, and among grass which was plentiful, and clothed with bright scarlet and yellow flowers, the daisy, buttercup, and a purple marigold, the party met with "three natives of smaller stature than was usual, and wearing no skins (sic). Two were very ugly and brutal looking, but the third sprightly and good humoured in appearance, accompanied with that "revolting laugh so general with these savages." They apparently made themselves very agreeable, and this leads Mr. Bussell to remark that the British population about to flow westward towards the Vasse, may expect a friendly reception from the blacks.

From the foregoing extracts, which I have selected from the original journals in the British Museum, it will be allowed that the natives of West Australia seem to possess an average degree of intelligence, and cannot be said to belong to the very lowest rank of human beings. In their natural state they cultivate only the qualifications of hunters, and while able to endure privations and fatigue, they are quite unfitted for continuous bodily

labour like the whites. In this connection it is laid down by Bishop Salvado, whose authority is unimpeachable, that to condemn a native to hard labour is equivalent to condemning him to death; and he found it necessary to divide the day's employment, giving three hours to mental, and three hours to bodily labour, the rest of the time being devoted to such relaxation as gymnastics, games, music and dancing.

The native diseases do not seem to be amenable to the ordinary course of medical treatment, and native remedies are frequently more efficacious. They pine at times after their wild bush life, and this "home sickness" is best allayed by allowing them an occasional hunting expedition.

Father Carrido, also an excellent authority on everything appertaining to the natives, assures us that they make good stockmen, teamsters and shepherds, and considers that an agricultural life is the easiest and most natural path towards civilization.

Regarding the native girls, Mrs. Camfield, superintendent of the school at Annesfield, Albany, reports that they have a great fondness for music. One young woman, she mentions, who was sent to Sydney, played the harmonium in St. Phillip's Church, and gained her living by teaching. Washing, cooking, and sewing are also very readily acquired by the young women under Mrs. Camfield's care, and many of her charges have left her to marry respectable civilized natives and become excellent housewives.

In the north of the colony, natives largely supply

labour on the settlements and in the Pearl Fisheries, and are thus gradually becoming civilized.

It is therefore permissible to hope that, in the case of our poor aboriginal, he will not, as all other savages seem doomed to do—die out. The conviction that he will is, however, very strong among the whites, and is, probably, mainly based upon the sad experience of many, who are witnesses to the frightful havoc wrought among the black, by that terrible gift of civilization—alcoholic drink.

It is often erroneously believed that man in a savage state is endowed with an absolute individual freedom of action; whereas in reality he is subject to a complete system of laws, which not only enslave thought, but allow no scope for intellectual or moral development. These traditional regulations and superstitions keep the Western Australian natives in a condition of barbarism, and cause them to violate many of the most sacred usages of life. For example the female sex are condemned to a degradation which is hopeless, simply because they are defenceless; and this not the result of momentary caprice, but enforced by unwritten traditional laws, which are as binding as those of the Bible or the Koran.

The same, or similar traditions, have on the other hand, taught the children of the bush how to provide for their natural wants, and well-armed intelligent white men will die of hunger in the desert, where the native will find a sufficiency of food.

One of the most interesting of their laws is that of

marriage, which is founded on the fact that they are divided into certain great families, all the members of which bear the family name as a second one in addition to their own. According to Sir George Grey the principal families are the following:—Ballaroke, Idondarup, Ngatak, Nagarnook, Nogonyuk, Mongalung, and Narrangur.

Then in different districts the members of these families give a local name to the one to which they belong, which is understood in that district to indicate some particular branch of the principal family.

The common local names are:—Didaroke, Gwerinjoke, Maleoke, Waddaroke, Djekoke, Kotejumino, Namyungo, and Rgungaree.

Strangely enough these family names are common all over the continent. They are perpetuated and spread throughout the country by two remarkable laws.

1st.—That children of either sex always take their mother's family name.

2nd.—That a man may not marry a woman of his own family name.

These singular laws exist among North American Indians, and a well-known writer reminds me that a similar law of consanguinity was probably inferred in Abraham's reply to Abimelech (Genesis, chapter xx, verse 12), "And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife."

Each Australian native family has its Kobang, or crest. Some animal or vegetable is taken as the sign,

and in recognition of this the owner of the Kobang will never kill the animal to which it refers, should he find it asleep; while his family vegetable can only be gathered under certain condition, and at special seasons of the year.

Again the North American Indians have a similar custom of taking animals, at all events, for their coats of arms. Thus the Iroquois have the turtle, and the Hurons the bear. Among civilized people in Europe, this custom, as we know, only exists among the upper classes. It is strange, indeed, to reflect that while the despised black-boy proudly owns and knows all about the cognizance of his ancestors, in shape perchance of Squirrel, Bandicoot, Iguana, or Kangaroo, the white settler's knowledge of heraldry is probably limited to a hazy idea that the lion, and the unicorn, are somehow connected with Her Majesty, the Queen.

Another very curious law is that which obliges families connected by blood, upon the female side, to unite for the common purpose of defence and avenging crimes. The family name, as I have said, is that of the mother; and as the father may probably have several wives, all of different families, so his children are liable to be divided against each other by deadly feuds. This law would itself prove a hindrance to any people emerging from a savage state. Thus it will be seen that the ties of blood-relationship are as nothing, compared with the bond of family; and one of the effects of a father bearing a different name from his children, is that a district of country seldom remains for two generations successively

in the same family. It is not easy to successfully pursue an enquiry into matters of this kind, because another aboriginal law forbids them ever to mention the name of a deceased person, male or female.

Although the natives do not cultivate the soil—subsisting entirely by hunting and fishing, or on wild roots and fruits—it must not therefore be supposed that they have no idea of property in land. Every tribe has its own district, and any intrusion for hunting, or other purpose, by another tribe, is liable to be resisted by force of arms.

These particular sections of their tribal districts are recognized as the property of individual members, as are also the wild animals found upon it; and each "landowner" is naturally very jealous of his rights, and pugnacious in upholding them. Trespass for hunting purposes is punished with death if the hunter is caught in the act; if the trespasser is tracked by footmarks, and so discovered, he is killed, if alone and in a defenceless state; but if he is attended by his friends, justice is satisfied with a warning spear-thrust through the thigh. The possession of *friends* has the tendency, as among more civilized folk, to somewhat mitigate the rigour of the law!

Death from natural causes is scarcely recognized by the savages of Western Australia. Murderers, by violent means, and sorcerers, by causing diseases, are held to alone prevent the poor people from living for ever. Someone is therefore always to blame; and this belief naturally keeps the survivors pretty busy in seeking out

these same sorcerers and murderers, in order to avenge the deaths of their friends. Another awkward principle is that if the guilty persons be not found, all his relatives are held to be implicated, so that satisfaction is generally obtained from someone!

If there be any hesitation, on the part of some abnormally tender-hearted relative, to undertake this holiest office of revenge, the ladies loudly remind him of his duty. He is, so to say, boycotted by his womankind. His wives will have nothing to say to him, the old women scold him, and as for the single girls they will not even glance at him. The funeral therefore is scarcely over before the average savage seizes his spears, collects his friends, and starts upon the warpath. The avenging party sometimes find the culprit, and despatch him there and then; but if they fail, their anger becomes so inflamed that they slay any unfortunate native who falls into their bloodthirsty hands.

Among the West Kimberley natives a curious method is in vogue for discovering the whereabouts of a murderer. The corpse is fixed in the fork of a tree, and in the ground underneath a number of small sticks are stuck pointing north, south, east and west. After the lapse of a few days the friends carefully examine these, and from the droppings of putrid matter which adheres to them, determine in which direction the guilty man is living. I am not aware that this practice is adopted in other parts.

Wife stealing is punished with the death of the seducer, or one of his relatives. Minor punishments

consist of spear-thrusts through certain portions of the body, such as thigh, calf, arm etc., a different part being assigned for all ordinary crimes.

Duels are common between individuals who have private quarrels to settle; a certain number of spears being thrown until honour is satisfied. They pay little attention to these wounds, but they soon heal owing to their naturally abstemious habits. Sir George Grey mentions an amusing and striking instance of their apathy, in connection with a fight, in what was then the village of Perth. He says:—"A native received a wound in that portion of his frame which is only presented to the enemy when in the act of flight; and the spear, which was barbed, remained sticking in the wound. A gentleman who was watching the fray regarded the man with looks of great commiseration, which the native perceiving came up to him, holding the spear (still in the wound) in one hand, turned round so as to expose the injury he had received, said, in the most moving voice:

'Poor fellow! Sixpence! Give it um!'"

Regarding Native marriage, I should mention that a female child is betrothed, in her infancy, to some native of another family, necessarily very many years older than herself. He watches over her jealously, and she goes to live with him as soon as she feels inclined. If she possesses personal charms she has anything but a happy young womanhood, for even if she gives no sort of encouragement whatever to her admirers, attempts are pretty nearly sure to be made to carry her off. Encounters resulting, she is in considerable peril, for each

combatant orders her to follow him and throws a spear at her if she refuses. The youth of a woman of any pretensions to good looks is thus often full of wanderings and captures and wounds, not the least of which latter are dealt her by the jealous wives of her abductors, who possibly find little difficulty in persuading themselves that she must have given their lords some encouragement. Lovely woman is given to this sort of thing, both in the hovels of the poor and the palaces of kings.

To use the words of the author quoted above—"Rarely do you see a form of unusual grace and elegance but it is marked and scarred by the furrows of old wounds, and many a female wanders several hundred miles from the home of her infancy."

From the nature of its food a black child needs very strong teeth; hence the mother suckles them for two or even three years, and families seldom exceed four or five in number.

Polygamy is general, and women are so highly valued as to be very frequently stolen. This is, however, chiefly because they perform all the laborious work, and collect a great portion of the food.

Alas! woman's rights are shamefully neglected, and no one takes her part whether innocent or guilty—the general principle being, "If I beat your mother, then you beat mine; if I beat your wife, then you beat mine," and so forth. Yet these poor wild creatures are not devoid of modesty. Their rules as to seclusion correspond remarkably with the law of Moses, as written in

Leviticus (Chapters XII. and XV.), while another Mosaic law—that of circumcision—is observed by the men.

The sympathies of travellers have been much wasted upon Aborigines, on the score of a supposed scarcity of food. As a rule they have an abundance, although they may run a little short in the height of the rainy season, or when they are overcome with laziness in very hot weather. The following list of articles, forming the food of the West Australian, is from the journal of the last-named explorer:—"Six sorts of kangaroo, twenty-nine sorts of fish, one kind of whale, two species of seal, wild dogs, three kinds of turtle, emus, wild turkeys, two species of opossum, eleven kinds of frogs, four kinds of fresh water shell fish, every sort of sea shell fish, except oysters, four kinds of edible grubs, eggs of birds and lizards, five animals of the rabbit class, eight sorts of snakes, seven sorts of iguanas, nine species of mice and rats, twenty-nine sorts of roots, seven kinds of fungis, four sorts of gum, two sorts of manna, two species of by-yu, or the nut of the zamia palm, two species of mesembry and themum, two kinds of small nuts, four sorts of wild fruit, besides the seeds of several plants. The above can hardly be called a starvation bill of fare, although, of course, it does not look very appetizing to the European.

The equipment of the Blackboy consists of his kiley (boomerang), hatchet, and dow-uk (a short heavy stick), which are stuck in his belt of opossum fur; also his different spears for war and chase — which, with his throwing stick, he carries in his hand. In the colder

parts of the continent he sometimes wears a warm kangaroo skin cloak. He also occasionally carries a wooden shield, curving inwards at the ends.

The wife, who always follows her lord at a respectful distance, is usually in heavy marching order. A long stick is carried in her hand, and a bag on her shoulders, in the top of which is placed any child who cannot walk. The other contents of this useful receptacle are numerous and heterogeneous, comprising the stock-in-trade of the family.

There will be a flat stone to pound roots with, pieces of quartz for making spears and knives with, and larger stones for hatchets. Prepared cakes of gum for making and mending weapons. Kangaroo sinews for manufacture of spears, and to sew with. The shell of a mussel to cut hair with, different small stone-knives, pipe clay, red and yellow ochre. These are a few of her belongings; and she likewise carries spare skins for cloaks, &c., between the bag and her sorely tried back. The natives are very skilful hunters, and it is an interesting and beautiful spectacle to watch one of these swarthy savages on the trail, with bright eye, and swift noiseless footsteps. Sometimes they join in company for the chase, which if kangaroo are hunted is "Yowart-a-Kaipoon." These public battues are governed by certain rules. The invitation issues from the native owner of the soil, and the first spear which strikes determines whose property the game is to be, no matter how slight the wound. The animals are surrounded, and each man has his position assigned; then the circle gradually closes in on the terrified creatures, but few of which escape.

The native hunting cries are wild and strange, always commencing with a hard consonant, such as "Kau," or "Koo-ee." They are thus audible much further than our "Hullo" or "Ho," beginning as the latter do with a soft aspirate. Kangaroos are also caught in nets, and pitfalls, and the hunter will sometimes follow up their tracks until they are so weary as to be approachable. This latter mode requires the very highest class of skill and the greatest endurance; for which reason only a few of the most renowned sportsmen can perform the feat.

So far as their cooking is concerned they cannot exactly be considered epicures. Sometimes they roast the kangaroo whole in a pit which they dig for the purpose; and occasionally cut it up and broil the portion piecemeal. The blood, entrails, and marrow are considered delicacies, and as such are reserved for the head men of the tribe.

Of their fishing, our native friends are justly somewhat proud. The captures are effected in three different ways; spearing, entrapping in a weir, and netting. In the first method they shew marvellous skill, whether in rivers or the sea. They scarcely ever miss their aim. Regarding the weirs they shew considerable sagacity in hitting upon the exact place; of course constructing them at low water.

Probably the greatest joy which a coast Native knows is the discovery of a stranded whale upon his property. As a rule he is very greedy over his food, not being greatly given to sharing it with others. Such unusual abundance, however, changes his whole nature.

He lights fires, and invites his friends from near and far.

Then, I am sorry to say, a most disgusting orgie sets in. The host and guests continue feasting for weeks, knowing no regular meal times but literally continually cutting, and for ever coming to the attack again. The revellers have been known to stay by the mammoth's carcase long after it has become quite putrid, and even it is etiquette to present each guest at parting with an evil-smelling chunk, to convey to absent friends, whose urgent private affairs may have kept them away from the delicious banquet.

Adult wild dog is occasionally eaten for a change, but puppies are an ever-welcome treat. As the dog is, however, with the blacks, as among the whites, frequently trained up to be the slave of man, the pups are often spared; and revolting as it appears to our notions,—wet nursed by the women of the family. Australia being the land of contraries, black swans and so forth, we need not be, perhaps, too much surprised at this approach to a reversal of the history of Romulus and Remus.

Like the leading citizens in a well known city, the West Australian native is a great admirer of the luscious turtle, and are not surpassed by the New Yorkers in their appreciation of terrapin. The latter they cook whole, shell and all, in the ashes; then removing the bottom shell, the upper one serves as a dish. Most delicious of all, however, is accounted the emu, and hence it follows that heavy penalties are pronounced, by the law-makers of the nation, against any one eating this

bird but themselves. I think I remember having heard that any sturgeon, caught in the Thames, belongs to the Lord Mayor of London, which would be a somewhat parallel case.

Cockatoos are considered another great delicacy, and are often killed with the boomerang. To see this strange weapon swooping wildly among a flock of these birds,—spinning, and whirling and slaying,—is one of the oddest sights imaginable.

One of the dexterous feats which Sir George Grey recounts is the killing of a bird as it flies from the nest. Two men are engaged in it, one of whom, placing himself under the nest, transfixes the latter with a spear. As a rule the creature is only frightened or very slightly wounded, and is slain by the unerring dow-uk of the other hunter as it quits the tree.

In opossum hunting the savage climbs the tree, which he notches into footholds as he proceeds; then either smokes or prods the animal out of his hole, when he seizes it by the tail and dashes it to the ground—always careful, however, to avoid being bitten.

Frog catching, when the swamps are partly dried up, is usually the duty or pastime of the women. It is no easy task, however, for while poking about with their long sticks in the mud, they are almost devoured with flies and mosquitos. This is pretty rough on these poor, wild, dusky damsels of the Desert.

Grubs, which are extremely palatable, are procured from the grass tree; and likewise in an excrescence of the wattle tree. They are eaten either raw or roasted, but

seem to be greatly improved by cooking. I am told they have a nut-like flavour, but I never had the courage to sample them.

In addition to their culinary duties the women have to dig for the various roots they dress for their husbands, and they become very expert in this occupation. When found the roots are sometimes pounded and mixed with a kind of earth, and sometimes roasted plain.

The By-yu nut is also collected and eaten with relish, which proves the great difference which exists between the Australian and the European stomach, for so violent a cathartic is this nut, that some of Captain Cook's crew who ate it nearly paid for their experience with their lives. There is, however, a pulp which encases the inner kernel, which, after certain preparation, can be used as an agreeable and nutritious article of food. Besides those I have glanced at there are innumerable other native dishes, products of the earth and of the chase, with which I will not trouble my courteous reader.

The Australian is a very thick headed person, and hardness of the native skull is strongly brought home to the European, who for the first time sees him using his head, as we sometimes use the thigh, to break obstinate pieces of stick across. I have seen them thus splinter tough boughs of nearly the thickness of a policeman's truncheon!

Next to this extraordinary hardness of cranium the extreme dexterity with which they use their feet would excite the surprise of the observant white man. They will pick up anything from the ground as readily with

their toes as we can with the hands; and as for climbing, they will "swarm up" a tree, a hundred feet high, in as smart a manner as an English sailor mounts the rigging of a ship. Nor does it matter to the climber whether the trunk of a tree is slender enough for him to embrace it or not. I have seen black fellows literally *walk* up a big tree by throwing a kind of lasso round it, and across their shoulders, and then lying well back, twisting the rope of vegetable fibre higher and higher as they ascend, until in the giddy height they land safely among the boughs at the top.

With all his physical strength, however, the poor Australian savage is but a short lived being. Not only are there no centenarians among them, but Englishmen, who have studied the natives attentively for a lifetime, have assured me that it is extremely rare for a black man to attain the age of fifty. The women age at a very early period of life, and little wonder. Moreover, without wishing to be ungallant or hypercritical, I may say that any living being more repulsive, in appearance, than the average old "gin", can scarcely exist on the face of a globe.

The childhood of the little black, who has escaped his parents occasional infanticidal proclivities, is probably the "jolliest" — to use a word well understood by English school-boys—which can be well imagined. Do what he will the young hopeful of the wilds is never chastised. Solomon's injunction about the rod has no place in the code of the Australian Aboriginal. The boy, who is rather brother than father to the man, (for the

men are practically children all their lives) does literally whatever seems right in his own eyes. The crime of ill-treatment of children is quite unknown among these poor uncivilized folk, who. fortunately for us do not read English police news, or they might occasionally wonder how their white brothers and sisters could be such savages as to maltreat helpless infants, as is but too common. In wife beating, however, they certainly manage to hold their own, and thus possibly manage to relieve their ruffled feelings. Yet am I assured that even this almost universal rule of marital brutality is not without its exception. White men, who have lived among the blacks, have assured me that there are hen-pecked husbands even in the Australian desert, and they further allege that the energetic spouses of the victims, instead of exciting disgust among their neighbours, are looked upon with more than ordinary respect; being, indeed, in some cases, run away with by men, envious of the possession of such strong-minded ladies. This is very encouraging.

In his admirable play of the Mourning Bride, far too little known to modern readers, Congreve has the well known lines :—

> "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,"
> "To shatter rocks and rend the solid oak."

If the dramatist overdoes it a little in the second line, he falls short of the literal truth in the first. The Australian savage is *devouringly* fond of music, but it has sometimes the reverse of a soothing effect upon him, for instance, when it takes the form of a war song. During

the singing of one of these he rushes madly up and down, stamping and jumping in an ever increasing frenzy.

And yet to the eye, when the words of one of these spirit stirring ditties are coldly set up in type, there seems but scanty material out of which to get up so much superheated steam.

Here is a specimen of a well-known war song.

" Yu-do dan na
Nan-do danna ! (Staccato !)
My-eree danna
Goor doo danna
Boon-ga-la dan-na (with a shriek)
Gonogo dan na,
Dow-al dan-na,
Narra-ra danna," &c., &c.

The last lines being hissed and shrieked with energy indescribable.

All this, being interpreted, means :—

" Spear his forehead,
Spear his breast,
Spear his liver,
Spear his heart,
Spear his loins,
Spear his shoulder,
Spear his thigh,
Spear his ribs," &c., &c.

When we consider our very slight knowledge of their language, feelings and passions, it is not surprising that we fail to appreciate the niceties of their music and poetry. Nevertheless it is a fact that an elderly and spiteful female, who possesses musical and poetic gifts, can very readily set scores of warriors thirsting for each others blood.

Mr. Threlkeld, in his Australian Grammar, says :—

"There are poets among them who compose songs which are sung and danced to by their own tribes in the first place; after which other tribes learn the song and dance, which passes from tribe to tribe throughout the country, until from change of dialect not one of the original words remain."

A new song is highly appreciated, and a savage who has travelled to distant parts of the Continent, sometimes brings back a few of the latest, with which, no doubt, he greatly "astonishes the natives!" Certainly these effusions are very savage and discordant-sounding to European ears, but of course, on the other hand, our music is insipid and ridiculous to the aboriginal taste and estimation.

An imitation by a native of an English song never fails to produce astonishment and shrieks of laughter. Indeed, in other matters besides music, the black boy regards us as an extremely absurd race of mortals. Perhaps he is right.

The only accompaniment to native songs which I have heard, is the beating of a board or clapping of hands. Any remarkable circumstance which occurs, is, as used to be the case with us, perpetuated in a ballad.

Sir George Grey tells us that when Miago, the first native who ever quitted Perth, was taken away in H.M.S. Beagle in 1838, the following was composed by a relative, and constantly sung by his mother during her boy's absence.

"Ship bal win-jal bat-tar dal gool-an-een,
Ship bal win-jal bat-tar dal gool-an-een," &c., &c.

Meaning,

"Whither is the lone ship wandering?
Whither is the lone ship wandering?" &c., &c.

Then, on his safe return, the same poet commemorated his voyage thus:—

"Kan de maar-o, Kan demaar-a-le
Tsail-omar-ra, tsail-o mar-ra-lo," &c., &c.

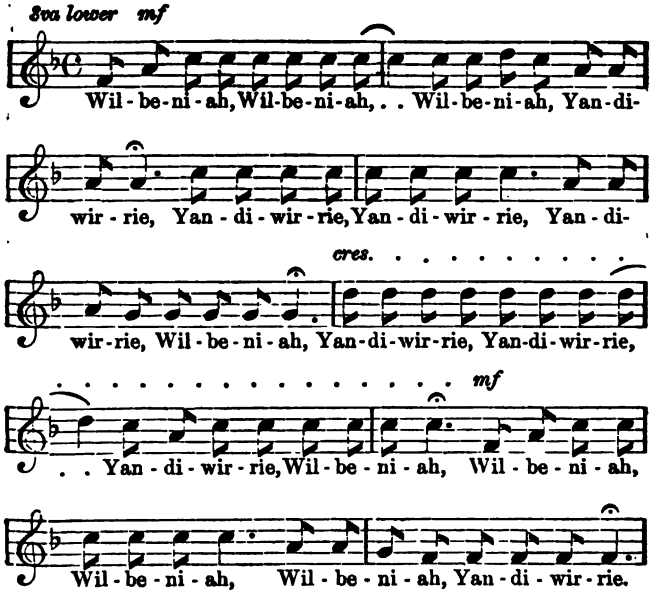
Meaning,

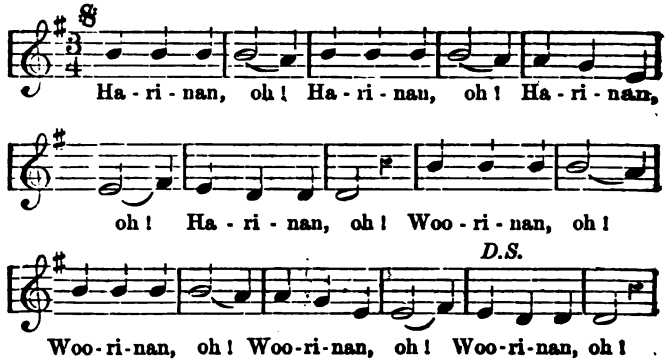
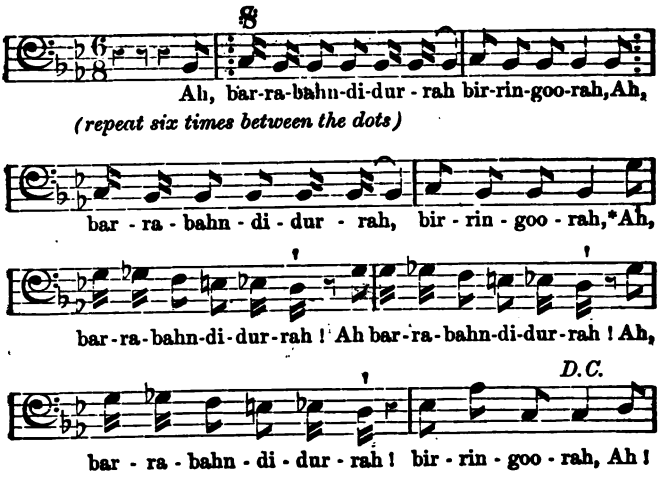
"Unsteadily shifts the wind oh! Unsteadily shifts the wind oh!
The sails-oh handle oh! The sails-oh handle oh!" &c.,&c.

It is impossible to describe the strange wild music of these swarthy denizens of the forest; but the abundant evidence of passion and feeling which it expresses, should forbid too hasty a judgment of a people of whom we really know so little.

But while it is difficult to describe the music so as to convey anything like an adequate idea of its effect, especially as many of their songs are simply deep guttural unmusical notes, it is within my power to give to the public the "words and music" of several of their more melodious songs. These have been supplied to me by a resident in Western Australia, who has also appended to each a few remarks as to the circumstances under which they were sung.

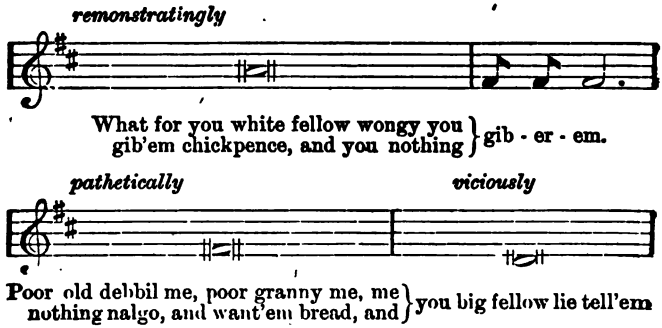
"Some time ago," he says, "one of the white colonists, held in high esteem by one of the native tribes near Guigin, was presented by them with what may be best described as "tribal rights" (corresponding to citizenship) over certain lands. During the ceremony of presentation was sung the following song, and it may be explained that "Wilbeniah" was the name of the land,

and "Yandiwirrie" the name by which the natives knew their friend. When they sang the first word they pointed to the land, and when they sang the second they pointed to the adopted tribesman, indicating by this probably, that the land was his, and that he belonged to the land."

Two natives were married, and, which is not always the case, both parties were great favourites, and wonderful to relate very young. After the marriage, a party of natives, male and female, belonging to their tribe gathered round the fire in front of their hut and sang the following measure, scores of times: "Harinan"

was the name of the Benedict, and "Woorinan" that of his Beatrice. The air is not unmusical, and the men's voices blended with those of the women very effectively."

The next is a different class of song altogether, being one sung at a corroborie, or native dance. Like all native ditties, it is repeated almost *ad infinitum*. It may be said to be divided into two parts, the first terminating at the asterisk, and being sung very smoothly—the second, which is largely composed of what, in music, are called "accidentals," is sung in a very loud excited, staccato manner, and its effect may better be appreciated by the singer *speaking* the notes rather than singing them. What the words mean I was never able to learn. No inducement was potent enough to win from my black friends even the faintest hint as to the meaning of the song. They merely laughed, and said, "nothing tell 'em." I am, therefore, unable to furnish a translation."

8
Ah, bar-ra-bahn-di-dur - rah bir-rin-goo-rah, Ah,
(repeat six times between the dots)
bar - ra - bahn - di - dur - rah, bir - rin - goo - rah, *Ah,
bar-ra-bahn-di-dur-rah ! Ah bar-ra-bahn-di-dur-rah ! Ah,
D.C.
bar - ra - bahn - di - dur - rah ! bir - rin - goo - rah, Ah !

"The Western Australian aboriginal does not sing in his own language only, nor does he sing only when he is pleased. I have seen two native women fight with their long, thick, hard wood staffs, accompanying their thwackings with songs in which they alternately cursed and derided each other in the choicest English and native Billingsgate. Indeed, it may be said that whatever passion or feeling seizes them, the black fellow must express it in song, and this leads, of course, to the improvising of such as the following recitative which was the result of a refusal to give a notoriously drunken, lazy native woman sixpence to enable her to indulge her propensity by drinking. She professed to be hungry and to want nalgo (food), but she had at that time sufficient food in the bag slung at her back to feed her for a week. Finding her entreaties were unavailing, she sang the

following to me several times—"Wongy" means "say" or "promise," and that I had promised her something was one of her pleasant little fictions."


remonstratingly
What for you white fellow wongy you gib'em chickpence, and you nothing gib - er - em.
pathetically
viciously
Poor old debbil me, poor granny me, me nothing nalgo, and want'em bread, and you big fellow lie tell'em

Regarding the religion of the aborigines, the evidence is somewhat conflicting. Certain it is that their legends are full of evil spirits and malignant demons which destroy men, women, and children. I think it is very doubtful if they have any knowledge of a beneficient God or righteous Creator. "Mullion" is a wicked being who lives in a high tree and seizes black fellows to devour in a higher abode, for he lives in the Milky Way.

Then there are some female demons who are much more cruel and implacable; one particularly who impales the poor black with her spear and carries him off wriggling and writhing to her den, where she roasts and eats him.

Then there is a famous creature called the *Bunyip*, a terrific monster, somewhat like our sea serpent. It is some fifty feet long, with a snake-like head and inhabits lagoons, rivers and swamps.

The *Bunnyar* is another variety of the *Bunyip*—which, as an American might say,—is a good deal like its horrible brother-demon, only considerably more so.

From the peculiarities of this evil beast, it is probable that the stories of the alligators in the North of Australia and in Queensland have penetrated to other parts of the Continent, and these formed the model upon which this terrible water demon has been constructed.

Piama is in some districts a word which signifies the common ancestor of the black folk, and may be taken to indicate a beneficient deity, and there are periodical celebrations and ceremonies which seem to contain the idea of a supposed conflict between good and evil influences.

It is, of course, unknown whether such religious observances have crossed over from Asia, or were invented on Australian soil.

Be that as it may, Christianity, the most potent engine of civilization, has undoubtedly proved its efficacy once more on the history of man in raising some of these wild natives so that they abhor their old degrading superstitions.

The aboriginal funeral ceremonies vary somewhat in different parts of the Continent, as may be well supposed over such a vast area.

For the readers' information on this lugubrious subject, I will set down briefly two or three descriptions culled from various sources.

The first funeral we will refer to took place at Perth in June, 1839. There were but few men present, as they were watching the widows in Perth. The two

blackboys, Yeuna and Warrup, were digging the grave, which, as usual, extended east and west. They commenced by digging with their sticks and hands several holes in a straight line, and then united them. All the white sand was thrown carefully into two heaps, and these heaps were tuated one at the head and the other at the foot of the hole; whilst the dirty coloured sand was thrown into two other heaps, one on each side. The grave was very narrow, just wide enough to admit the body. During the process of digging—an insect having been thrown up—its motions were watched with intense interest, and as it thought proper to crawl off in the direction of Guildford, strong proof was furnished that the sorcerer resided there; for as I have already said, there *must* be a sorcerer somewhere to account for a death. When the grave was completed, they set fire to some dried leaves and twigs, and throwing them in, soon had a large blaze. Old Weeban knelt on the ground at the foot of the grave, his head bowed to the earth in profound attention. He was watching to discover in which direction the "boyl-yas," or the aforesaid sorcerer, when drawn from the earth by the fire, would take flight.

At last he indicated a due east direction with his spear, and a smile of satisfaction irradiated the faces of the young men, for they knew that it *was* towards Guildford they must go to avenge the foul witchcraft which had slain their brother-in-law.

The next part of the proceedings was to take the body from the females. They raised it in a cloak, the poor old mother making no objection to the removal,

but passionately kissing the cold rigid lips, which she could never press again. The corpse was then lowered into the grave, and seated upon a bed of leaves, which had been laid there directly the fire was extinguished, the face being turned towards the east. The women grouped together, sobbed forth their mournful songs, whilst the men placed small green boughs upon the body, until they had more than half filled up the grave. Then cross pieces of wood were fixed in the opposite sides of the grave, green boughs were placed on these, and the earth from the two side heaps thrown in until the grave was completed, which then, owing to the heaps at the head and foot, presented the appearance of three graves nearly similar in size and form lying due east and west.

The men having completed their task, the women came with bundles of *blackboy*-tops which they had gathered, and laid these down on the central heap, so as to give it a green and exceedingly pleasing appearance. So much for the first funeral.

The corpse at another obsequy (this time on the Vasse River), was that of a native herdsman, who had been murdered. His master writes :—"The funeral was a wild and fearful ceremony. Before I had finished in the stock-yard, the dead man was already removed and on its way to the place of interment, about a quarter of a mile distant. I was guided to the spot by the shrill wailing of the females, as they followed mourning after the two men who bore the body in their arms. The dirge, as distance blended all the voices, was very plaintive; nor did the distance destroy the harmony. Some

of the chants were really beautiful; but, perhaps, rather harsh for our ears. They produced a terrible jarring on my brain, and caused tears to flow even from the eyes of children, who knew little of the cause of the lament.

At length the procession reached the place, and there was a short silence. When the body touched the ground a piercing shriek was given; and, as this died away into a chant, some of the elder women lacerated their scalps with sharp bones, until the blood ran down their faces in streams. The eldest of the bearers stepped forward and proceeded to dig the grave. I offered to dig the grave, but they refused: the digging stick was the proper tool. When with this the earth was loosened, it was thrown out in showers with the hands, forming, in the same line with the grave, two elongated banks.

At length the grave was finished, and they then threw some dry leaves into it and kindled a fire. When this had burnt, they placed the corpse beside the grave and gashed their thighs saying—

"I have brought blood!"

They stamped their feet forcibly on the ground while repeating this, and splashed the blood around them. Then, wiping their wounds with wisps of grass, they took up the dead man. A loud scream ensued, and they gently lowered the body into the grave, resting it on the back.

After that they filled up the grave with soft brushwood, and piled logs on this to a considerable height; after which they constructed a hut over the top of the wood work. Thus ended the funeral number two.

The third, and closing account, I take from the sketch of a funeral at King George's Sound.

The death ceremonies in the neighbourhood of King George's Sound are invariably accompanied by specially loud lamentations. A grave is dug about four feet long and three wide, and perhaps also a yard in depth. The earth that is removed is arranged on one side, in the form of a crescent. At the bottom of the hole is placed some bark, and then some green boughs; and upon this is laid the body, ornamented and enveloped in its cloak, with the knees bent up to the breast, and the arms crossed. Over the body are heaped more green boughs and bark, and the whole is then filled in with earth. Green boughs are finally placed over the earth, and upon these are deposited the spears, knife, and hammer of the deceased, together with the ornaments that belonged to him; his throwing-stick on one side and his kiley and dowak on the other side of the mound. The mourners then carve circles in the bark of the trees that grow near the grave; and lastly, making a small fire in front, they gather small boughs, and carefully brush away any portion of earth that may adhere to them. Their faces are coloured black or white in blotches across the forehead, round the temple, and down the cheek bones; and these marks are worn as mourning for a considerable time. They also cut the end of the nose, and scratch it for the purpose of producing tears.

There is thus, it will be seen, considerable diversity in the burial rites of the different tribes. One point, however, which they all appear to attend to, is the careful

investigation regarding the *boyl-yas*, or sorcerer, who has caused the death. They are always objects of mysterious dread, having power, they believe, to transport themselves through the air in invisible form. Sometimes another monster is to blame, called the *wan-gul*. It resides in fresh water, and usually attacks females, who pine away and die under its baleful influence.

It has been said elsewhere that the physical features of Western Australia resemble, in many respects, those of the Holy Land. Both suffer from periodical draughts, and largely depend upon wells for water. Then both have fertile and smiling pastures, side by side with barren sandy wastes. Both have a warm summer, and a pleasant sea-breeze near the coast, and both have largely a limestone foundation. Still more curious to notice is the similarity in some points between the customs of the Aborigines and those of the ancient Jews.

Some of the superstitious rites just referred to remind us of the passage in I. Kings, chap. xviii, verse 28:—"And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them."

Then again, Jeremiah xlvii, 37:—"For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: and upon all the hands shall be cuttings," etc. In many parts of Australia the natives cut off portions of their beards at funerals, in addition to the lacerations.

Again, in Deuteronomy xiv, 1, it is written, "Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between

your eyes for the dead." Evidently the prohibition referred to an ancient Jewish, as well as an idolatrous custom. It is also very singular to remark that when the women among the Aborigines do cut and disfigure their faces for the dead, it is always between the eyes, just as was explicitly forbidden by Moses.

Elsewhere the Prophet Isaiah reprehends the custom of remaining among the graves, which is, to this day, a prevalent custom among the natives of Western Australia.

"A people which provoke me to anger," etc., "which remain among the graves and lodge in the monuments."

The native form of taking an oath also closely resembles that described in Genesis, where "the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master."

Australian mothers, again, name their children from some circumstance connected with their birth, or early infancy; just as in Genesis xxx, 11, Leah said, "A troop cometh, and she called his name Gad."

I have already referred to the practice of circumcision, which is common in many parts, from St. Vincent's Gulf to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

I have likewise alluded to the interesting coincidences, but make no attempt to draw inferences therefrom. With but meagre data and inadequate knowledge, the subject is unapproachable. If, however, these primitive people should have received from the common Creator certain laws for the guidance of their lives, does it not furnish food for reflection? It is scarcely necessary that I should disclaim any intention of identifying my

aboriginal friends with the Lost Tribes !

I have already mentioned the kiley, or boomerang, as a native weapon; but this most extraordinary implement deserves special attention. Its possession alone, I contend, redeems the Australian savage from his usually assigned place at the foot of the human ladder. Doubtless other nations—notably the Africans and Indians—have an instrument of somewhat similar form, but the main characteristic is wanting, namely, the *return flight.* Its usual form is a piece of hard wood with the curve of a parabola, about two feet long, two and a half inches broad, one third of an inch thick, and rounded at the extremities. One side is flat, the other rounded, and it is brought to a bluntish edge. It is discharged by the hand at one end, the curved edge being forward and the flat side upwards. After advancing some distance and ascending slowly in the air with a quick rotatory motion, it begins to retrograde, often falling on the ground behind the thrower.

As long as the boomerang retains the forward impetus and catches the air as it will naturally do—on the flat side, it continues to rise. When, however, the movement imparted to it ceases, it begins to fall, and its course of falling will be in the line of least resistance, which is in the direction of the edge that lies obliquely towards the thrower. It will therefore fall back, in the same manner as a kite when the string is suddenly broken is seen to do, when it falls back for a short distance. But the kite, having received no rotation to cause it to continue in the same plane of descent, soon

falls, in a series of fan curves, to the ground, as also will the boomerang if it loses its rotatory motion.

Now it is evident that this apparently marvellous property of the boomerang (founded of course on a well-known law of projectiles) must be of great advantage to the natives, who largely use it for throwing among flocks of fowl on rivers, lakes, and marshes. When, after striking or missing its object in the water, instead of being lost it returns back to its owner.

There are several varieties of boomerang, but they all follow this law, being of course to some extent dependent on the skill of the person wielding it. Could any device be more ingenious.

I have often heard it averred that the natives are utterly wanting in a sense of humour, and therefore are certainly irredeemable savages. Well, I do not know the exact line by which humour and wit are separated, but I think the following anecdote has a savour of both about it.

A well-known explorer, worn out with fatigue, and weak from privations, flung himself by the fire to rest, having almost reached Perth on his return journey. His wretched and woebegone appearance attracted the attention of the native who accompanied him. He had some knowledge of English, and thus addressed his master: "What for do you who have plenty to eat, and much money, walk so far away in the bush?"

The explorer, tired to death, and rather annoyed at this conundrum, made no answer. The black went on: "You are thin, your shanks are long, your belly is

small—you had plenty to eat at home, why did you not stop there?" It is hard to make these simple folk understand the love of enterprise and adventure, so the traveller had to say :—

"Oh, you don't understand; you know nothing."

"I know nothing!" he exclaimed, with a laugh, "I know how to keep myself fat; the young women look at me and say, 'He very nice, he fat.' They look at you and say, 'No good, he too thin legs too long, he walk too far in the bush.'"

It cannot be denied that the Englishman had the worst of the argument.

Into the discussion—a warm one in the Colony—as to whether the present Aborigines Protection Board, which is independent of the Government, should be directly responsible only to the Crown, and should therefore be abolished, and the entire charge of the natives left in the hands of the Executive at Perth, I do not mean to enter. There is much to be said on both sides. Those against the Board's independence say that it is absurd that the latter who are charged with all governmental duties respecting the superior race, the Whites, should not be trusted to deal also on their responsibility with the Blacks. Those in favour of the continuance of the Board's exceptional powers, say that the poor ignorant black subjects of the Queen should be specially protected against the possible greed and racial prejudices of their powerful neighbours, who have, after all, gradually pushed the poor creatures out of their ancient inheritance.

The case for the Colonial Government is very ably put by the Premier, Sir John Forrest, in the following memorandum, addressed to the Administrator, for the Governor's perusal :—

"Premier's Office,
Perth,
20th April, 1892.

Memorandum for His Excellency, The Administrator.

1. I have the honour to bring under your consideration the question of the position occupied by the Aborigines Protection Board, constituted under the local Acts 50 Vic. No. 25 and 52 Vic. No. 24.

2. The 70th section of the Constitution Act provides the funds for the use of this Board, which are expended without the slightest control on the part of the Ministry or Parliament.

3. The insertion of the 70th section in the Constitution Act, and the simultaneous passage of the Act 52 Vic. No. 24, were at the time viewed with much dissatisfaction by the people of the Colony, inasmuch as it was considered as a reflection upon their past treatment of the Aboriginal Race, besides being, in their opinion, totally unnecessary. It being, however, understood that the Imperial Government would insist on these Acts being passed before granting Responsible Government, when they were introduced by the then Government no opposition was offered.

4. The Board thus constituted and supplied with ample means has had an existence of about 18 months, and has not in the slightest degree been interfered with, nor has it in any case sought advice from Ministers. The appointments to the Board have been made by the Governor without any reference or consultation with Ministers, and the Board has managed its business as it pleased.

5. This Board, so carefully brought into existence by statute, and supplied with funds by the Constitution Act, is still to a very large extent dependent on the Government for

carrying out its duties. While it purports to be a body independent of the Government, it is in reality greatly dependent upon it. Take, for instance, the machinery through which it distributes relief to the sick, the old, and the infirm. This has to be done by the magistrates, the Government medical officers, and the police; nor is any charge made against the £5,000 a year paid by the Government to the Board. As this vote is not all expended, and the unexpended portion is invested by the Board, the Government might fairly charge for all services rendered by the magistracy, the medical officers, and the police; or, seeing that the Government is opposed to the continuance of the Board, might even refuse to render any assistance, whatever, in which case the Board would be almost powerless to render relief throughout the limits of this very extensive Colony Again, in regard to the protection of the aborigines, the Board is to a large extent powerless. It cannot execute warrants without the assistance of the Government through the police, and is, therefore, altogether dependent on the Government in this respect.

6. I do not remember, during the 18 months of its existence, any act or representation on the part of the Board with the object of protecting the aborigines, that duty being carried out now, as it always has been, by the Government.

7. The question asked by everyone is, What is the use of this Board, and with what object is £5,000 of the revenue of the Colony handed over to it? Can it be contended that the aborigines are better looked after by this irresponsible body of five gentlemen, who meet once a fortnight at Perth, than they would be by the Government, which is responsible to Parliament, and which has officers all over the Colony to carry out the duties? Or, is it because the Imperial Government believes that these five gentlemen, who meet once a fortnight in Perth, and who have but little machinery to do anything, are more competent and more trustworthy, or more likely to do what is just and right to the aboriginal race than Her Majesty's Govern-

ment in this Colony? No one, I venture to say, will assent to either of these absurd propositions.

8. And yet it would appear that a feeling of distrust of the people of the Colony to act fairly in dealing with the Aboriginal Race was the only reason why this section found a place in the Constitution Act. There was really a misconception of the whole question. The paucity of the aborigines within the settled districts was not realised. In the South-Western corner of the Colony, with the exception of a few score scattered about here and there, they have entirely disappeared; while within what is called the settled portions of the Colony, the natives work on the sheep stations, and the police visit the stations and protect their interests when necessary. The natives who live on the borders of settlements, who are, as a rule, troublesome as sheep-stealers, the Board is altogether powerless to deal with, and those in the interior have no dealing yet with the white man.

9. The whole duty of this Board since its appointment has merely been to authorise the officers of the Government, viz., magistrates, medical officers, and police, to give relief to the sick, the old, and the infirm; and the Board has to rely upon these officers of the Government to bring these cases under its notice, or it would never hear of them. The number of natives living near Perth, and therefore such as may personally apply to the Board, is not more than a dozen.

10. Supposing the Government decided to leave the Board to carry out its duties without any assistance, what would be the result? It is clear that the Board would be almost powerless to do anything. The means at its disposal would be really wasted in appointing agents here and there, and the old, infirm, and sick natives would in many places be entirely neglected. It would be impossible for the Government to permit this on the grounds of common humanity, and the Government finds itself in the position of having to look after the interests of the natives through its officers, and at the same time pay for the upkeep of

a Board which has not the power or the machinery to do the work.

11. My object in writing this to you is that you may submit this memorandum to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State, and that he may be informed of the position of this question, and the views of this Government upon it.

12. It seems to me that the approval of the Imperial Government to the repeal of the 70th section of the Constitution Act, and the consequent placing of complete trust in the people of this Colony to do what is just and right to all Her Majesty's subjects, whether white or black, would be a graceful act, and would still further strengthen the bonds of loyalty and affection existing between the mother country and this portion of Her Majesty's Dominions.

13. Should the Secretary of State be disposed to take a contrary view of the question, the dissatisfaction now existing must increase, and it will be found that a Bill to repeal this section will be passed every year, or will either have to receive the Royal assent or be vetoed. It was with difficulty I was able to prevent a Bill being introduced at the recent session of Parliament, and if it had been introduced it must have been carried unanimously, as the feeling against this exceptional and unnecessary legislation is unanimous throughout the Colony.

14. Besides the reasons I have given there is also the Constitutional one, which is very important. By this exceptional legislation the Governor is placed in a position to act on his own responsibility, and not upon the advice of Ministers. This may easily place the Governor in direct conflict with his advisers, and result in much inconvenience and injury to all concerned. In no other part of Australia was it considered necessary to place the Governor in a similar position, by which he is involved to act on his own responsibility; and the people of this Colony naturally resent being treated differently to all other of the Australian Colonies, and they very justly, I think,

consider it a grave reflection upon their honor and integrity of purpose.

15. I would, therefore, most strongly urge upon Lord Knuteford the advisability of acceding to the unanimous desire of the people of this Colony; and in urging this I am confident, that while the concession will remove a grievance and a just cause of complaint, it will be to the advantage of the Aboriginal Race.

(Sd.) JOHN FORREST,
Premier.

Last year a series of suggestions for the Board's beneficial interference, on behalf of its humble protegés, was made by its Chairman—the Hon. G. W. Leake, and these are, I believe, at the present time, being carried out.

Mr. Leake's contention was that the Aborigines Protection Board have £5,000 a year and more, to spend in the interests of the natives, and it is submitted that it would be beneficial if the Board could get a statement of the condition of the natives throughout the Colony, and of the relations in which they and the Europeans stand to each other.

With that view it would be well if the Board could get a highly intelligent, educated gentleman, who could visit every station in the Colony, the various goldfields, and the pearl fisheries, from about Geraldtown to the DeGrey, and ascertain the number of natives, their mode of employment, their habits, their treatment, their diseases, and this is as much for the sake of statistical information, as of finding fault with either race.

Of course there must be great differences in the treatment, by various Europeans, of the natives in their employ. For instance, I know of some squatters who feed their natives badly and work them hard. Then the natives run away, and warrants are issued by the magistrates for their arrest as absconders. Sheep are stolen, and this may arise from the fact that the native shepherds are few and insufficient, that they are imperfectly supervised, that they are poorly fed, that they suffer from the destruction of native game.

In any case these are matters which should be investigated, which has never been yet adequately done. The Tasmanian Aboriginals are extinct, those of South Australia are nearly extinct, those of New South Wales and Queensland are lessening in numbers, and it is surely desirable that some specimens of the surviving race should be preserved.

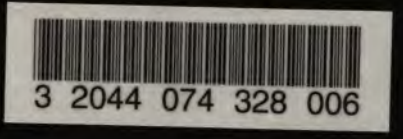
There are some stations that occur to me as I write—Darlot's, Lacey's, Wittenoom's, Bush's, Forrest's, Sholl's, Grant's—these are, I believe, models as to treatment of natives, and they might be taken as standards for comparison. Reports could be made, not to the general Government, but to the Board, who would impart them to the Government, and so place it in a position to judge to what extent "police protection," as a means of repression of native outrages, is needed.

Every station should be visited and reported on, the opinions of settlers and police gathered and examined, a vast body of valuable facts could be amassed,

and thus some tangible results would follow from the expenditure of the sum apportioned from the General Revenue and placed at the disposal of the Board. Nor need it be feared by the squatters, or settlers, or gold diggers, that the Board is starting a system of espionage or interference. The motive of the Board is simply to obtain information, more or less accurate and practical, from all available sources, and these investigations should likewise extend to the blacks inhabiting country not as yet occupied by Europeans.

In concluding these remarks on the West Australian Aborigines, I would say a few words to English folk who flatter themselves that they belong to a higher order of created beings than the Western Australian Aborigines, who have been represented as mere baboons possessing an innate and incurable deficiency of intellect, rendering them incapable of instruction or civilization. Let them reflect that a similar opinion was one time held by the cultured Romans concerning the Aborigines of Great Britain. Cicero, in one of his epistles to Atticus, thus refers to our ancestors :—

"Do not," says he, "obtain your slaves from Britain, because they are so stupid and utterly incapable of being taught, that they are not fit to form a part of the household of Atticus."



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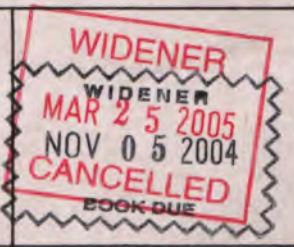

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